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Less predictable are the tomes bookending the collection: not one but two hardbound copies of Ayn Rand's 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged*, a favorite among many supporters of free markets and limited government. "Those aren't my only two copies," Campbell says, laughing. "*Atlas Shrugged* is the book I give to our interns after they spend a summer here, working for free. I consider it to be the authoritative work on the power of the individual."

It is late September in Washington, D.C. Another Rand disciple is in the news: Alan Greenspan, the former Federal Reserve chairman, is on the talk shows promoting his autobiography. Like Greenspan, Campbell is upset that the Republican Party has been growing the government, hiking spending with funds that don't exist. But Greenspan is out of public life. The 52-year-old Campbell, an Orange County, California, car salesman who arrived in D.C. just two years ago, is one of his party's fastest-rising stars.

"He's an absolutely fantastic member of the Republican conference," says a senior GOP aide. "I think he's become the heir apparent to lead the Republican Study Committee," the anti-tax, anti-spending caucus founded in 1973 by then-insurgent proto-Reaganite Republicans. Campbell currently heads the RSC's Budget and Spending Taskforce.

Outside of an actual leadership post or a committee chairmanship, carrying the RSC's banner is a House Republican's surest path to media prominence. But Campbell differs from RSC stars such as former chairman Mike Pence (R-Ind.). Pence combined a fairly rote anti-spending message with heaping helpings of culture war conservatism. In September 2007, for example, Pence advanced a resolution condemning MoveOn.org for a newspaper ad that criticized Iraq

commander Gen. David Petraeus.

That sort of politics doesn't animate Campbell. He is one of those Republicans who, like Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), blames the GOP's lax spending discipline for its election losses. He attained his office after a special election in December 2005 to replace Rep. Christopher Cox, a Republican who had just been appointed chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Campbell thus spent a year in the majority as the GOP collapsed around him.

"I started to question what was going on," he says. "I didn't think what we were doing was" —he pauses—"the right thing to do. I can't say I was surprised that we lost."

Campbell has had a year in the minority since then, and there he has found his role: smiling, take-no-prisoners outrage at government spending. Campbell votes for partisan "sense of the House" resolutions, such as the time-wasting measure condemning MoveOn.org. But he's far more interested in exposing the spending habits of both parties. He maintains the Green Eyeshade blog at the conservative Web hub Townhall.com, where he systematically attacks his fellow members for what they're adding to bills or planning in the cloak rooms. In one September post, he matter-of-factly pointed out that Alaska's Ted Stevens, the senior senator from his own party, "led the earmarking pack" on this year's \$459 billion defense appropriations bill.

A number of elected officials now blog. Most of their efforts read, in content and in style, like punched-up versions of talking points and fund-raising letters. Campbell's blog is different. He calls out colleagues for taking contributions from the companies for which they're writing earmarks. In a post about the defense bill, Campbell named and shamed Rep. Bill Young (R-Fla.) and Rep. David Hobson (R-Ohio) for directing most of their earmarks to contractors who had donated to their campaigns. "I will let you draw your own conclusions," he wrote. The subtext: If Campbell has rebuffed contractors asking for favors, why can't they?

"Of the first 50 meetings I had after I was elected," he tells me, "47 were with businesses asking me for money. I was just stunned. Gee, I didn't know I was just an ATM machine for taxpayer's

money.”

During the floor debate over the defense appropriations bill, Campbell honed in on a \$2 million earmark for Sherwin-Williams, a paint company that is developing a “paint shield” for military vehicles. In the process, he locked horns with the fearsome chair-man of the Defense Appropriations Committee, Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.). To everyone’s surprise, Campbell cleaned the 33-year congressman’s clock.

After Murtha rambled about how the military probably wanted the paint shield earmark even though it wasn’t on its “priority list,” Campbell pounced. “Mr. Chairman,” he said, “you said you’re ‘sure’ the military [wants it]. So you’re not aware if, in fact, the military has asked for this kind of technology?”

Campbell kept his eyes trained on the Democrat. Murtha didn’t have anything to say.

“I guess the answer to that is no,” Campbell said.

Of course, the House isn’t a debat-ing club. The earmark survived any-way.

Campbell encounters this sort of resistance all of the time. “My Demo-cratic friends,” he says, “say rich peo-ple can afford it if we raise their taxes. And they can. But the rich didn’t get that way by giving away pennies and dollars so that people like us could waste it. When you raise taxes on people they will sit down with a cal-culator and say ‘How can I not pay this?’ I can point to Atlas Shrugged: It’s explained right in there.”

When Campbell talks like this he again echoes McCain, who lances legislators for buying their re-election with pork spending and a mutilated tax code. There is another way he sounds like McCain, and it's less likely to warm libertarian hearts: He backs his party and his president completely on the war in Iraq and the right to spy as long as the war on terror demands it.

"I'm very much a privacy guy," Campbell avers, speaking specifically about telephone surveillance. "It's something I feel strongly about. But there's something I feel even more strongly about: I don't want to be blown up. I am willing to give them some limited access to my phone records because of this war on terror."

When Campbell talks like this it's even easier to imagine him rising in the leadership. This is, after all, what every modern Republican in power says about privacy. When he's pressed on how long the government should have these powers, Campbell can't definitively say. "We don't know how long this war will last," he says. "These laws should sunset. But I think everything should sunset, except for tax cuts."

Tepid as his opposition to surveillance power may sound, statements like that are a window into the debate the GOP is having about its future. A party that spent the 1990s resisting calls to give more power to the executive branch and its intelligence agencies is now engaged in a different debate, and the parameters of that discussion are rather narrow. Should we embrace the Bush doctrine and expand executive power permanently in a post-9/11 world? Or should we only do it temporarily, until we can declare some sort of victory in the war on terror?

Campbell won't stray from that debate's cramped boundaries. He criticizes his party freely on domestic policy, and not at all on foreign affairs. But on the issues he cares about, he is encouraging a dramatic change of focus for a party with a fainter and fainter connection to the views that allegedly motivate it. This is heartening stuff from a Republican expected to join his party's leadership.

Still, two years in Congress—one in the minority, one in the majority—haven't given Republicans like Campbell many opportunities to lead. It might take a Democratic president and

a smaller Republican conference to force a real debate on what Republicans stand for. When that happens, we'll know how much the party really wants to listen to John Campbell.